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Ditching Career Centric COIN: Exhuming Robert Komer with the Drawdown in Afghanistan

Jan K. Gleiman

The Missing Debate

Ever since President Obama announced that the US would begin drawing down its forces in Afghanistan, the news and commentary on our counterinsurgency efforts have reenergized the discourse on COIN, strategy, and the future of that now painful cliché called "population-centric COIN." For the last several years we have heard arguments and observed the practical scholarship of the so-called "COINdanistas" such as John Nagl and David Kilcullen. We have witnessed various spins on how best to operationalize the COIN objectives of defeating an insurgency and creating stability. Some, such as Mark Moyar have taken a different approach than specific focus on the population and examined the importance of identifying and empowering the best leadership as the key to a COIN campaign.[1] More recently, we have witnessed the rise of an anti-COIN movement led in spirit and voice by Army Colonel Gian Gentile. The “COINtras” disparage the very idea of counterinsurgency because the most recent policies pursued in Iraq and Afghanistan failed to nest with their conception of good strategy and the fundamental purpose of our armed forces.[2] Yet despite the energy and proliferation of the COIN discourse by all of these very intelligent and credible scholars, there remains a void, virtually ignored by scholars and pundits alike. That void is filled by the questions surrounding the actual organization of COIN campaigns. In other words, once strategic leaders have determined that the defeat of an insurgency (foreign or domestic) and the establishment of internal stability represent our desired end-state, how should one organize the campaign to best operationalize the critical tasks that bring victory?

[1] Mark Moyar, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from Civil War to Iraq* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).
[2] Carl Prine’s Line of Departure, “Brother Can you Paradigm.” Military.com http://www.lineofdeparture.com/2011/07/04/brother-can-you-paradigm/#ixzz1RCLeaF6i (28 August 2011.

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Last year, in one of his first interviews after taking over the ISAF Commander position in Afghanistan, General David Petraeus made the comment indicating that after almost ten years of intervention in Afghanistan, the US and NATO were only then beginning to get the organization of the campaign right.[3] While he attributed many of the problems to the relegation of the mission to an economy of force operation over that time, those who were involved in and studied the campaign have always understood that there was much more to it. Since then, the progress over the last couple of years indicates that our efforts are certainly getting some things right with respect to organization and unifying the efforts. Have the United States and NATO now come close to getting that organization of the campaign right? As we drawdown, are we organized in such a way as to help the Afghans secure the success that we have gained together? Have NATO and the United States optimized the campaigns organizational structure for this whole of government approach that is supposed to ensure stability? Well if the most prolific and respected theorists of counterinsurgency from the previous generation are right, then the answer is a resounding "NO." If you do not believe me, go ahead and ask anyone involved to explain the organization of the NATO effort and how that nests with military and civilian agencies and how that connects with the echelons of Afghan government. I challenge anyone to do that in a coherent manner. There are few people who can. Those who try, and several have, quickly digress into relationships that are the source of their frustration regardless of their beliefs about the mission. Usually, they just change the subject.

The evidence of organizational problems from the campaign's inception until late 2008 is overwhelming and well documented. The military initially tried to focus on security, and then on working through only security forces, while governance was left to under resourced PRTs with ambiguous chains of command.[4] SOF elements operated independently of conventional force "battle-space owners" and pursued their own goals, which were often only partially understood by conventional commanders even at higher echelons. Coordination improved over the years but was often dependent on personalities and adhoc coordination mechanisms. Even as late as 2008, outside observers were finding little to no unity of effort as the US and NATO could be described as fighting "ten different wars."[5] Recent studies indicate that NATO's much touted counterinsurgency campaign continues to suffer from disunity of effort even with substantial improvements made since 2008.[6] Maybe that is because under the existing structure, it can't get any better.

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[3] *NPR*, **"**Petraeus: U.S. To Pursue 'More Nuanced' Operations In Kandahar" http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=129857868 (28 August 2011).
[4]Henry Nuzum. *Shades of CORDS in the Kush: The false hope of "Unity of Effort" in American Counterinsurgency*. (The Letort Papers, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2010).
[5]Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010) Kindle location 847.
[6]Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011). The author, along

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For the past 10 years the whole NATO military and civilian monstrosity implemented efforts through separate chains of command between our conventional forces, special operations forces, provincial reconstruction teams, various United States government and NATO agencies, and contractors. Those who are familiar with the last several years of effort in Afghanistan and Iraq will not be surprised. Over these years, the United States and NATO have implemented the campaign with an organizational design that was adhoc and frequently modified. Military commands and those from non-military departments attempted to create organizational models that would operationalize their part in the campaign without over-shifting, sacrificing, or threatening the bureaucratic turf, professional interests, or existing organizational cultures. The military had a doctrine for defining command relationships and establishing joint headquarters that was designed for optimal performance in meeting the critical tasks of conventional warfare. In truth, our government, beginning with the military, set out to wage "population-centric" counterinsurgency through a comprehensive approach as early as General Barno's attempts in 2003, but ended up hindered by career-centric practices and the tired, painful, and wasteful refrains of our government bureaucracies.[7] Those who witnessed first-hand the campaign from 2002 to 2008 would find the current situation under General Allen, and Petraeus and McChrystal before him, much improved in terms of unifying the advisory and COIN efforts. However, in all of the admirable efforts of ISAF to achieve unity of effort, some very basic and fundamental redesign could enable a smaller leaner organization to help the Afghans achieve better results in strengthening and stabilizing the current government, while defeating the persistent insurgent organizations.

With the help of the most respected COIN theorists from a previous era and some simple tenets of organization theory, this impending drawdown could be the best opportunity to do what General Petraeus claimed we were only beginning to do in early 2010,ie get the organization right. With fewer troops, more trained advisors from across our military and government, and leaner budgets more effectively and efficiently managed, we could maintain and capitalize on the success, which General Petreus called "fragile and

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with seven other CGSC students conducted over 80 interviews with veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and found general praise for changes in the campaign with persistent criticisms of the organizational structure.

[7]Terms such as population centric, enemy centric, and leader centric COIN are sill in common and official use by the community at large. Their usefulness, however, has been diminished by their over use and varying interpretations of the word "centric." Some practitioners seem to wrongly assume that centric some denotes exclusivity of the focus rather than multiple lines of effort. See Nathan Springer, *Stabilizing the debate Between Population Centric and Enemy Centric COIN*. 13 August 2011, http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/stabilizing-the-debate-between-population-centric-and-enemy-centric-counterinsurgency (30 August 2011).

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reversible".[8] As the Afghan government and the security forces that we have so inefficiently built over the past 10 years must now take the lead, supporting them with a quality advisory and support effort with tactical flexibility will be of tantamount importance. The trade off will be in the suppression of egos, the dumping of organizational rice bowls, and the breaking of some beloved line and block charts.

Fixing the Organization

So what would this entail? There are actually two fundamental reforms that could be made to the campaign organization. Each of them will be an affront to the interests of our entrenched national security bureaucracies. Each one will be belittled as naïve by the most senior apparatchiks of our government. Each one will leave the careerists, personnel managers, and career advisors befuddled and the slow rolling and scoffs will likely commence and resound throughout our government. Yet, if defeat of the Taliban and a stable Afghanistan are the end-state and separating the insurgents from the population is the critical task, and the comprehensive approach is the way, then shouldn't our campaign be organized to best support that? Advising and assisting the Government of the Islamic republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) at all levels in the next few years is critical. Transition has already begun and this is no longer our counterinsurgency fight. It is now the GIRoA's counterinsurgency campaign and our Foreign Internal Defense (FID) mission.[9]

First, our national command authority should appoint one single leader of all diplomatic, defense, development, and intelligence efforts. This individual would be a single and true chief of mission that has the authority over this comprehensive effort and answers to the president while having direct coordinating authority with Principals of the National Security Council. Pundits will huff and puff over the name and title of such an individual, but such a single leader and his staffs would be responsible for advising the GIRoA at the national level, with clear lines of authority.[10] If the United States were engaged in this effort alone and without NATO allies, this would be difficult enough. With the many difficulties imposed by the dynamics of NATO politics and bureaucracy, this is a taller order still. Yet, there is precedent for such action. Even if the idea of a single

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[8]*Threat Matrix, A Blog of the Long War Journal,* "Full Text of General Petraeus' testimony to Congress." http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2011/03/full_text_of_general_petraeus.php (28 August 2011).

[9] Foreign Internal Defense is defined as : Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security. US Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 1-02: Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 2010).

[10]Why not use the term Ambassador?

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political/military leader is beyond the realm of the politically possible, consolidation of the leadership of defense, diplomacy, development, intelligence, and governance to a team managed at the highest level is one of the most important best practices of a counterinsurgency campaign.[11]

Second, this single unified commander and staff should have a similarly unified command structure at geographic echelons of region, province, district, village etc. This commander and staff would be the senior advisor to the GiROA representation at that same level. The unified advisory effort and structure would in turn help to facilitate and encourage the GiROA to unify its own comprehensive efforts at counterinsurgency. At the geographic echelons of Province and District, leaders of the advisory effort and their GIRoA governor counterparts would lead the comprehensive approach to their areas, fighting the insurgency and securing the population based upon the unique conditions of their particular area with the maximum autonomy in pursuing the enemy and engaging the population. The parallel hierarchies of GIRoA and NATO advisors would allow NATO to partner, mentor, and monitor the GIRoA bureaucracy and prevent corruption or the wasteful expenditure of all types of foreign aid. It would provide a parallel structure to monitor corruption at every level of the Afghan government.

Heeding the Advice from the Past

As so much has lately been written on counterinsurgency in the last 10 years and so many individuals at all levels have returned from the COIN fights in Iraq and Afghanistan, there has been a growth of those who would call themselves COIN experts. Yet, one has to wonder, how many of this new cadre of young "COINdinistas" have actually read the works of COIN theorists from the previous generation (or FM 3-24 for that matter). David Galula and Roger Trinquier seem to be popular enough, but Roger Thompson, Frank Kitson, and John McCuen are no less astute on the subject, but certainly less well known. There are others out there, but these five were practitioners, scholars, and historians. They had a great deal of experience in counterinsurgency, stability operations, low-intensity conflict, and combined arms maneuver. As they reflected upon history and their own vast experiences in defeat and victory in counterinsurgency they dedicated substantial portions of their seminal works to explaining how counterinsurgency campaigns should be organized and how important it was to get the organization right. Unfortunately, while scholars and the writers of COIN doctrine paid attention to most key principles and themes, they seem to have flinched at the theorists' prescriptive principles about organizing a counterinsurgency campaign and related corollaries about organizing an advisory effort by an interventionist power. With experience and wisdom of COIN

[11]Kalev Sepp PhD., "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency." *Military Review*, (May-June 2005) 8-12.

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practitioners, historians, and scholars, these men agreed on several principles of organizing a COIN campaign.

These theorists are sometimes criticized for their prescriptive approaches and their contemporary focus on Maoist insurgencies. But each of these theorists understood what modern COIN "experts" continue to emphasize. Every insurgency and every campaign is unique and must be addressed based upon its own context. This is as true for COIN as it is for any conflict, war, or other political situation. But in all of history there are continuities and contingencies, there is uniqueness and similarity. While every situation may be *sui generis*, there are principles that may be applied, *ceteris paribus*, to situations. Organizing to defeat an insurgency has some principles, which, *ceteris paribus*, should be applied within the context of the situation.[12] The fact that each of these theorists arrived at similar principles of organization should lead us to consider them in context when applying campaign design.

These COIN theorists each advocate that the counterinsurgent campaign be unified at the top with one single entity or leader. History has often demonstrated how counterinsurgency campaigns suffered when there was little unity of command at the top. The theorists further advocate that at each geographic echelon of region, province, district and village, that the organization be mirrored with a single entity or leader to manage and coordinate all activities.[13] If a single competent leader cannot be attained, then serious effort must be applied to create an organization, system or structure that replicates it. Again, history has frequently demonstrated that without unified management at each level that created a unified plan, the counterinsurgency campaign suffered.

As John McCuen explained reflecting the writings of each of the others:

> *"Counter-revolutionary warfare requires the use of military, political, psychological, economic, and organizational action from the village to national levels. These actions must be carefully coordinated in unified doctrine and plans to achieve specific objectives. Each unified plan must be backed by detailed plans of civic action, political operations, economic operations, security, military operations etc., which coordinate all available resources to achieve the required objectives. A unified plan obviously requires at each level a centralized intelligence, planning and control group and some individual who is responsible for ensuring coordination and for the success or failure of operations. Unified*

[12] These two common Latin phrases are used to explain the problem of any COIN doctrine that tries to glean best practices from history. *Sui Generis:* Of its own thing. *Ceteris paribus:* All things being equal.
[13] Naturally the geographic echelon can be broken down by whatever framework or terminology exists in the given country.

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planning, centralized control, and a single point of responsibility are the very minimum requirements for a unity of effort, which will offer success against a unified revolutionary movement."[14]

By strict definition though, a counterinsurgency campaign is waged by the legitimate government of a state against an internal threat. Often this internal threat has external support, but that is part of the context, which must be considered in the campaign design. For several reasons, which are beyond the scope of this article, there have been countries that have deemed the internal struggle of another distant country important to their own national interest. Frank Kitson refers to these as "interventionist powers." In the case of the current campaign in Afghanistan the US and NATO are clearly the interventionists. For interventionist powers, the theorists prescribe a system that mirrors this unity of command and effort on every level to coordinate all advisory assistance and support. Again, the continuities of historical research seem to back up the theorists and reinforce the importance of a mirrored structure of the interventionist. This is not only because it provided unity of effort, but also because it greatly assisted the host country in building its own system. The structure for advisory assistance, set up by the interventionist, helped the host country build its own security and governance structures and to connect the government from bottom up and the top down.

One should be forewarned though before one drinks this organizational "Kool-aid." The theorists make clear that prescriptive organization is not the *sine qua non* of success. Organization structures that follow the prescribed advice of the theorists will not help if there is a bad plan or poor leadership, but organizations that are not structured to achieve unity of effort could ruin a good plan led by a good leader.[15]

It should be no surprise that these theorists drew from their practical experience and comparisons to recent history. True, they faced largely Maoist modeled insurgencies but each one was unique and demanded the talents of operational art. Yet when it came to designing the ideal organization, there were clear historical continuities. The difficult campaign in Malaya after World War II provided a model for success, well contrasted by early failures in the campaign. After a few years of failed efforts, General Briggs, General Templer, and Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttelton all recognized that a unified command structure was necessary to facilitate unity of effort, consistently address grievances, apply the right kinds of combat power, and demonstrate good governance. Good leadership was essential, but it was not enough. Leadership required authority and

[14]John McCuen, *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War: The Strategy of Counter-Insurgency* (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2005), 72.
[15]David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. (Saint Petersburg, FL: Glenwood Press, 1964) 92.

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authority required an organizational structure that informs its use with a holistic understanding of what needs to be done. In Malaya, it was not until the leadership of General Templer and the authority granted to him for complete control of all resources and departments including civil service, military, police, and intelligence. He commanded these through the unified Federal Executive War Council. His predecessor, General Briggs established a similar unified structure at geographic echelons, and Templer then empowered these State War Executive Councils and District War Executive Councils (SWECs/DWECs) with authority. That authority allowed each state or district to address the insurgency according to specific and sometimes unique characteristics.[16] Today, the US Army would call that Mission Command.

If a counterinsurgency campaign, does not have the right leadership, with the right authorities and the right structure, it will not be able to break the competing influences of the organizations that make up its effort and were designed and structured for tasks and environments other than comprehensive COIN warfare. Only with leadership, authority, and structure at all levels was Templer able to counter the influences of his subordinate organizations, achieve common understanding, and execute a comprehensive, mutually supporting COIN campaign. Only then could they learn and adapt.[17]

While Afghanistan experts are realistically wary of centralization, they might do well to look at the conduct of the counterinsurgency campaign in Dhofar, Oman in the 1970s. There the Sultan of Oman, with the help of the British military, (primarily SAS) led a counterinsurgency campaign in a tribal land, which had generally been ungoverned space. Though a small campaign by geographic comparison, the British achieved unity of effort amongst themselves and with their host nation at echelons largely because the SAS used their chain of command as the singular chain from the interventionist power, based upon tribal region. The SAS teams then connected to district "governments" based on tribal areas.[18] Rather than trying to hold elections or build local governments from scratch, they merely counter-organized the population by working directly with tribal leaders and establishing local security forces known as "firquat."[19] The SAS used their

[16]Richard Stubbs, "From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds: The Evolution of British Strategy in Malaya 1948-60." In *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, edited by Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010). See also Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011).

[17]Richard Stubbs, "From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds: The Evolution of British Strategy in Malaya 1948-60." In *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, edited by Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010) 115.

[18] These SAS teams were specially organized for this fight and augmented based upon the assessment of the particular region. Known as Civil Action Teams (CAT) these teams worked everything from the needs of the population, to tribal security forces.

[19]Pronounced Fir Ka.

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influence with the tribal leaders and their chain of command to connect them with the next higher echelon of governance, the Wali of Dhofar. The SAS worked closely with conventional forces that assisted in the SAS area of operation (AO), but did not have to worry about what the PRT or USAID was doing in their AO because those functions were embedded into the SAS teams and did not have separate chains of command. In Dhofar, the British followed the principles of the theorists with respect to organization of the campaign but tailored their organizational design to the unique characteristic of the environment and the insurgency, rather than succumbing to the organizational interests of the various British agencies involved.[20]

Other case studies, especially Vietnam demonstrate that coordination of efforts, unity of effort, and harmony of effort are easy things to write into a manual or demand in meeting or cable, but when they clash with resistant organizational culture, they do not yield the success anticipated. Vietnam provides a case in point and perhaps a distant mirror. While the United States had an extreme amount of power and influence, they were always the interventionist power, advising, and coercing. Yet the pacification efforts of the war suffered terribly until the establishment of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) in 1967, where pacification efforts were unified under a single chain of command.[21] Security, development, governance, and intelligence efforts of the United States answered to General Westmoreland through Robert Komer. Though there was not a single leader at the top, the relationship between, General Westmoreland, Robert Komer, and Ellsworth Bunker managed to speak with one voice.[22]

More importantly though, the very organization of the CORDS program with respect to unifying the management of a comprehensive approach at geographic echelons, served to facilitate better organization of the Vietnamese. As William Colby, the successor to Komer as CORDS Commander explained:

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[20] Ian Beckett, "The British Counter-insurgency Campaign in Dhofar, 1965-1975." In *Counterin- surgency in Modern Warfare*, by Daniel and Carter Malkasian Marston, Ian Beckett, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010). Tony Jeapes. *SAS : Operation Oman* (London: William Kimber & CO Ltd., 1980). Jeapes, Tony. Interviewed by Jan K. Gleiman, Michel Dinesman, Winston Marbella, and Carrie Przelski, 4 October 2010, AA1017

[21] This article and the discussion here is focused on the efforts of pacification in the Vietnam War. In using the US experience in Vietnam as a case study, one cannot ignore the fact that in addition to and inextricably linked to the insurgency was the direct threat of conventional force action with the North Vietnamese. This was fortified compound warfare, but the CORDS effort served to govern and stabilize South Vietnam after the Tet offensive helped to decimate the ranks of the Viet Cong. See Dale Andrade, *Westmoreland was right: learning the wrong lessons from the Vietnam War.* Small Wars and Insurgencies, (June 2008).

[22]Westmorland and Komer were replaced by General Abrams and William Colby in 1968, but continued to work closely and achieve something very close to unity of command at the top.

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> "The campaign (CORDS) brought to the Vietnamese something beyond initiative. It brought organization. President Thieu quickly understood that a major strategy of pacification required the kind of unified management structure the Americans finally produced in the CORDS machinery. In response, he set up a Central Pacification and Development Council to direct the campaign and the work of all the Ministries and agencies of the Government involved in it. He placed the Council in the office of the Prime Minister with its own integrated staff led by an effective Major General, Cao Hao Hon, who could speak with the direct authority of the prime minister. All of the Ministries, including Defense plus the Joint General Staff, were represented on the Council, so that its directives were specific and binding on all the local organs involved in the pacification campaign. None could ignore them by asserting that it had not received instructions from its parent Ministry."[23]

Why was CORDS deemed necessary in the first place? What was wrong with the way that things were organized before? Just as in Afghanistan over the past 10 years, military efforts to root out the insurgents, to build police and pursue security efforts, development efforts, and intelligence efforts all suffered from a lack of coordination and unity of command. The bureaucratic organizations and their cultural resistance to integrating and giving up control of their own programs, people, and assets prevented unity of effort.[24] In Vietnam, according to Robert Komer, the behavior patterns of organizations played a role in how they interpreted missions. Each organization tended to make policy conform to practice when they were confronted with critical tasks, environments, and contexts for which they were not designed. These bureaucracies tweaked policy to match existing structures rather than changing structures to best operationalize the policy.[25]

The implementation of CORDS fixed much of the organizational problems with the counterinsurgency fight in Vietnam. By integrating the forces of the interventionist power focused on pacification, it provided the example and the model for the host country that was desperately wanting in its organization. It could not fix everything, but it was far better than prior efforts.

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[23]William Colby. *Lost Victory: A Firsthand Account of America's Sixteen-Year Involvement in Vietnam.* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989) 260.
[24]Henry Nuzum. *Shades of CORDS in the Kush: The false hope of "Unity of Effort" in American Counterinsurgency*. (The Letort Papers, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2010). Jones, Seth G. *In The Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.
[25]Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy at War* (Washington D.C.: Westview Press, 1986) 89-92, 159-173.

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Exhuming Komer in Afghanistan

The almost 10 year history of our intervention in Afghanistan has witnessed a bizarre and evolving organization. The structure of the organization at the top and at geographic echelons has never matched the prescriptive model of the theorist. Thanks to Goldwater-Nichols and inculcated doctrine of joint warfighting, the services are able to integrate within an organizational structure that is well designed for massive combined arms maneuver operations against symmetric threats and for some contingency operations. These organizational models didn't quite jive with the, often misunderstood, nature of the conflict or the problems faced in Afghanistan. Over this time, however, there has occurred an evolution of organizational culture in the military, and to a degree in the other agencies and departments, that helped facilitate other systems of unity of effort. The absence of host country government institutions at the beginning of the campaign and the difficulties involved with growing them have placed the interventionist powers in the difficult position of often having to build, lead, and, mentor all organizations within the host country campaign. Yet the command and control structures of the military didn't match the organizational design needed for the critical tasks of COIN. One can look at the most comprehensive histories of the ongoing campaign and find numerous examples of disunity of effort caused by separate chains of command attempting to achieve a comprehensive approach. To varying degrees, the command structures of general-purpose forces, special operations forces, afghan military and police forces, intelligence, development and governance efforts have been separate and disjointed. As the years progressed, Commanders and decision makers have instituted various measures to improve command and control and facilitate better coordination of activities in order to achieve unity of effort. But as an interventionist power, we have not exactly provided the GIRoA with an example of an effective structure from which to wage a counterinsurgency campaign.[26]

Consider for a moment how the organizational structure worked over the last 10 years. The provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) were a kind of triumvirate of command structure designed to protect the stove-piped turf of the leading agencies. Each had a military commander, a commander from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), responsible for development and political head from the Department of State (DOS). This design meant that this single organization responsible for helping the GIRoA connect its governance authority through the provinces to districts and villages had three separate commanders who represented the governance advisory effort from the interventionist power to the host country at the province level. Add to this,

[26]Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011).

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the fact that the regional command (RC) commanders and their staffs would also seek to hold key leader engagement (KLE) with those host country leaders and their staffs and provide security. [27] Additionally, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) elements would also seek their own avenues of influence to these host country provincial and district governments. Information between these various leaders and stove-piped commands rarely travels seamlessly causing some confusion and consternation among the host country and the various agencies, organizations, and military commands involved in the NATO effort. This meant that frequently objectives that needed to be nested were not and as leaders reached impasses on important decisions and the key nuances of counterinsurgency, clarification and guidance from higher headquarters went up varying chains of command. DOS representatives would report back directly to Kabul, while USAID and the military reported to regional staffs, and CJSOTF elements reported to their separate regional headquarters to CJSOTF and later CFSOCC-A.[28] While Commanders and decision makers have refined coordinating structures and been highly effective in articulating a common vision, does such a model facilitate the level of unity of effort needed for a comprehensive approach? Does it provide a governance and command and control model for the Afghans to wage this campaign as we begin to leave?

As one General Officer who worked for ISAF described recently:

> "It was an insane structure in Afghanistan. I believe now that you needed to have the battle-space owner own everything. Yes that was a hard thing ... When we were best we had clear relationships and coordinating mechanisms with the BCT. You can't solve the problem if you get organization right or perfect, but you can make it insolvable if you get the organization wrong."[29]

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[27]Key Leader Engagement or KLE is a term widely used in the military vernacular to describe meetings to influence key personalities of the host country. The term was used in both Iraq and Afghanistan and continues to be used today. See Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011).

[28]Henry Nuzum. *Shades of CORDS in the Kush: The false hope of "Unity of Effort" in American Counterinsurgency*. (The Letort Papers, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2010)17, 21. Also see Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011) specifically interviews .AA603, AA604, AA614. Also see Seth Jones, *In The Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan.* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009) 167. Also see Joint Center for Operational Analysis. *Provicial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: An Interagency Assessment* (Suffolk, VA: US Department of Defense, 2010) 19.

[29]Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011) author references interview number AA807.

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So where has this odd structure hurt unity of effort? When one examines the history of the campaign, the real question becomes, where hasn't it? One glaring example is the vital counterinsurgency question of local security and police forces. Local security initiatives are a vital part of counter-organizing the population to take responsibility for their own security. Yet, if not well planned and coordinated at echelons of government, there are great dangers in associated with arming populations. The confusing organization of the host nation and the interventionist power of the US/NATO made this counter-organization difficult in both Iraq and Afghanistan, as there was significant resistance and disagreement about how to legitimize, incorporate, and control grassroots counter-organization effort.[30] Co-opting, building and strengthening the local police or tribal *Arbacai* forces is quickly becoming a central element of effective counter-organizing. In some cases DOS representatives from PRTs deliberately undermined SOF efforts to organize, train, and equip such forces that are only recently becoming a cornerstone of the security effort. The slowness, maddening caution, and in some cases outright resistance to initiatives like VSO, LDI, and now ALP could be reminiscent of Robert Komer's sad critique of CORDS as too little, too late.[31]

Organizational interests in many cases prevented even the remote consideration of organizational design that uses centralized hierarchical structure and delegated command authority to achieve unity of effort. Instead, the United States has relied on the slow but persistent promulgation and inculcation of a common doctrine and the gamble of hoping that the right people can come together and achieve unity of effort. As a result, our own agencies again played out their repertoires with some variations, just as Komer lamented about Vietnam.[32] As Henry Nuzum brilliantly explained in his Strategic Studies Institute monograph on the PRTs:

> "The Army, and the nation more broadly, interpreted the experience in Indochina as the error of attempting COIN, when in fact the interagency effort had succeeded when properly organized and resourced….The US is no closer to unified authority than it was in the earlier 1960s, approximately 5 years before CORDS was finally implemented. Field management has not received attention

[30]Neil Smith and Colonel Sean MacFarland. "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point." *Military Review* (March/April 2008): 43. Also see Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011) 53-70.

[31]Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy at War* (Washington D.C.: Westview Press, 1986). Also see Komer, Robert. "RAND." *Publications* and *Reports*. 1972. http://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P4443.html (29 August 2011). The acronyms VSO, LDI and ALP are part of an evolution of terms used to describe programs of tribal and village security efforts mostly be SOF. They stand for village Security Operations, Local Defense Initiative, and most recently, Afghan Local Police.

[32]Robert Komer, *Bureaucracy at War* (Washington D.C.: Westview Press, 1986)

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> from Washington that it did during the Vietnam War. Not surprisingly, practitioners and doctrine writers seem to assume that policy makers will fail to integrate civilian and military authority…There is a tendency among participants to concede that a literally integrated chain of command would be ideal, but to defend whatever level of integration they have experienced as the highest level feasible."[33]

In Afghanistan, the bureaucracies have played out their career-centric habits longer, albeit with some evolutionary and incremental improvements. DOS insisted on the power of the central government and built a police force that did not work with the Army (or anyone else). The Army has spent the last several years trying to fix that with a separate 3-star command. USAID and the PRTs built projects that inadvertently aided the insurgency, fed government corruption and wasted US dollars. Special Forces aggressively hunted the enemy often without coordinated explanation and sometimes with negative effects on other COIN efforts.[34] Brigade combat teams and divisions whose headquarters, properly resourced and integrated, could have provided the hub of centralized coordination struggled to finally get to a point of understanding their role and limitations in these conflicts. All organizations attempted to engage the GIRoA representation at all levels with varying degrees of interventionist power integration. All was done with some coordination and varying levels of unity of effort. These efforts ranged from amazingly efficient, even against the odds, to the deplorable. Usually it meant relying on "Hand-shake CON" relationships that had no formal structure or authority or various LNO relationships and fusion teams.[35] Even the most effective and efficient lash-ups of random units, agencies, and commanders were not enough to have built an effective and coherent amnesty or reintegration program in Afghanistan or arrive at the central policy solutions that could facilitate the counter-organization of the population. Comprehensive and coordinated reintegration policies began only very recently.

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[33]Henry Nuzum. *Shades of CORDS in the Kush: The false hope of "Unity of Effort" in American Counterinsurgency*. (The Letort Papers, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2010) 104-105.
[34]Gambastes, Donald. *"HOW GOOD IS OUR SYSTEM FOR CURBING CONTRACT FRAUD,WASTE, AND ABUSE?"*. Testimony before The Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development, May 24 2010. Also see Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011).
[35]Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011) This term was used by several interview respondents especially those working in SOF. "Hand –Shake CON" is the name for a command relationship when there is no formal relationship. It is a play on acronym terms used to describe command relationships i.e. OPCON, TACON and others.

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Unity of Effort the Hard Way

When the Army published FM 3-24 with a great deal of fanfare in 2006 the principle of unity of effort was front and center. Yet, while the authors were clearly influenced by the same theorists mentioned above, they did not share the theorists' belief in the importance of unified command structure at the top and at geographic echelons. That manual, as well as its Joint counterpart and the later USG COIN Guide, all recognize that unity of command is ideal but usually impossible to achieve.[36] In an article on best practices in counterinsurgency published in 2005, professor Kalev Sepp reviewed several historic COIN campaigns and attempted to identify continuities of effective practices. The Army thought Sepp's list was so good that they copied it almost verbatim, with one glaring exception. Where Sepp observed that a single leader under a unified chain or command proved effective, the Army replaced that with "Encourage strong political and military cooperation and information sharing."[37] The omission and substitution are indicative of the fact that we have chosen a different path of least resistance in terms of bureaucratic friction. Unfortunately, it is one that generates greater clausewitzian friction.

Many believe that unity of effort is mostly in the realm of finding the right leadership and has little to do with organizational structures, authority or even a common doctrine/understanding. Those of us who have spent time working in such environments tend to agree and have readily seen the effects of good and bad leadership. Mark Moyar maintains that leadership is what makes the difference in successful and unsuccessful COIN campaigns. His advocacy of leadership is correct but incomplete.

> "If, as the population centric school of thought maintains, counterinsurgency were primarily a question of finding the right methods or tactics, techniques, and procedures as they are known in military parlance, then victory would be won easy once the proper methods were identified. History, however, does not record such outcomes. Sound counterinsurgency methods dictated from on high, in the form of orders or doctrine, have consistently failed when good leaders were lacking. The installation of good leaders, by contrast, has most often produced success even if those individuals were not told in detail how to do their job."[38]

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[36] Army, Department of the. *FM-3-24 Counterinsurgency*. (Washington DC: Department of the Army, December 2006) Chapter 2. Also see US Government, DOD, DOS, USAID. "US Government Counterinsurgency Guide." (Washington, DC: 2010). Also see US Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 3-31: Command and Control for Joint Land Operations.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 2010 Chap 2.

[37] Army, Department of the. *FM-3-24 Counterinsurgency*. (Washington DC: Department of the Army, December 2006) 1-29.

[38] Moyar, Mark. *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from Civil War to Iraq* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009) 5.

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Moyar's point and his thesis are partly right. Leadership and personal dynamics can be a *sine qua non* of counterinsurgency. But to rely on picking the right leadership alone assumes an ability that, even with the most refined and careful systems, is hit or miss. What he is saying is little different than what so many practitioners of counterinsurgency have said when asked about unity of effort problems. That leadership, personal dynamics, and relationships, properly manipulated, will solve the quest for unity of effort. But it is also about organizational design, structure, and where authority is consolidated. Leadership without authority is like an engine without oil and leaders without authority are just salesmen trying to win a war. Defined command relationships matter, even if doctrine writers and executives of government departments would sometimes prefer to wish them away.[39]

Organization, therefore, is at least as important as leadership and common doctrine. Organization theory emphasizes the intuitive notion that in designing an organization, structure and authority will be based on the purpose of the organization. What is it trying to do? When a host country or interventionist power embarks on counterinsurgency, then defeating the insurgency becomes its purpose. In conventional warfare, a commander attempts to unify control of all the tools he will need to complete his task of defeating the enemy. In counterinsurgency, a commander must do the same. The difference is that in conventional conflicts one is often less concerned about other agencies of government at echelons and counter-organizing the population. Counterinsurgency requires these other elements of national power as well and therefore it requires structures and authorities that combine military, intelligence, police, development, and civil administration functions. This provides all the more reason and emphasis as to why the US needs interagency reforms that will provide this flexible whole of government capacity.

It's Bigger than Afghanistan

The problems in the US prosecution of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan lay not in the leadership talents of US generals or diplomats, nor does it lay in the adaptive ability of our separate agencies and institutions, rather it lays soundly on the inability of our chosen and legacy organizational structures to empower leaders and enforce adaptation through clear lines of authority established through the optimal organizational structures. Our joint headquarters are designed to manage combat power and warfighting functions. They must be redesigned if they are also going to manage and control the non-warfighting

[39] The term "Executives" is used here in reference to John Q. Wilsons book, Bureaucracy. Refer to that chapter for his insights into the power and motivations of those in the executive level. John Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It?* (New York, New york: Basic Books, 1989).

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functions of development, governance, engagement, reintegration etc. The organizational cultures and essences of our other agencies and departments involved in foreign policy have maintained the territorial inclinations, unhealthy levels of separation, and parochialism that Komer lamented about in the years following Vietnam. They can be traced back to Article 2 of the constitution, but also include the structures of committees in Congress and the internal power politics of our legislative branch.[40] If national leaders and policy makers cannot break these through serious comprehensive reform, then our vast bureaucracies involved in foreign policy will continue to implement policy under the intoxicating influences of the individual organizational interests which are born of the cultures and essences of the agencies and departments. Leaders will continue to preach policy and plans that call for "population centric" approaches to counterinsurgency but the reality will be "career-centric" decisions that erode chances of success with anything close to reasonable or efficient expenditures. This will continue to inhibit our ability to assist other fragile states that are trying to build effective government organizations to govern and protect their populations. As one expert panel contends:

> "Executive branch lacks an effective 'whole of government" capacity that integrates the planning and execution capabilities of the many federal departments and agencies that have national security responsibilities."[41]

So let COL Gentile and other scholars and pundits debate whether or not we should be engaging in counterinsurgency assistance to GIRoA until they are blue in the face and the bloggers have run out of bandwidth. The essence of the void in this discourse is that if we are going to embark on such a mission, we should be able to design the implementing organizations to accomplish the mission as effectively as possible and with the understanding that the prescriptive principles of those COIN theorists would likely keep costs much lower. As the DOD uses design to frame and understand problems, the government must also design the tools and organizations with enough flexibility to address the problem. Simply put, we should do it right, or change our strategy to reflect COL Gentile's thinking, which is what our organizations are better designed to support. So then, as we drawdown and transition, let us truly apply organizational design and unify the effort by creating a more unified command and a leaner advisory force built on parallel hierarchies and unified sub-commands. We can provide an example for the Afghans to mold and strengthen their institutions. The theorists of our fathers' generation will be glad that we listened at least belatedly.

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[40] Project for National Security Reform provides a great deal of information on this argument. See www.pnsr.org. In referring to Article 2 (The Executive Branch) this study also refers to Titles of law and National Security Directives.

[41]Quadrenial Defense Review Independent Review Panel, *The QDR in Perspective: Meeting America's National Security Needs in the 21st Century* (Washington DC: Advance Copy Received from USIP, 2010).

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As one high-ranking ISAF General Officer lamented when reflecting on Templer's pro-consular authority and unified command structure at echelons and compared it to the campaign in Afghanistan:

> "Why wouldn't you do that? Counterinsurgency is a complex problem that required unity of effort and a unified solution. This is how it was for all players, the less unified we were the harder it was. I know that key leaders at the highest levels did not push for more power and authority. Should they have? If a commander or ambassador asks for that now he wouldn't get it and in the very act of asking he would create scar tissue and once rejected there would be bad blood. We need a BRAC like solution, a blue ribbon panel, to design and recommend it. Then we need a President and/or Congress to approve it. It is just too hard to get done when those asking and proposing are part of the deal."[42]

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[42]Jan K. Gleiman, *The Organizational Imperative: Theory and History on Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency Campaigns*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Foundation Press, 2011) AA807.

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